

Message Text

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ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00 INRE-00

CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05

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FM AMCONSUL LUANDA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3818

INFO AMEMBASSY KINSHASA

AMEMBASSY LISBON

AMEMBASSY LUSADA

AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

CINCLANT NORFOLK VA

CINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER

C O N F I D E N T I A L LUANDA 0935

NOFORN

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS PINT MIR

SUBJECT: FNLA MINISTER DISCUSSES CURRENT SITUATION

1. I CALLED ON MINISTER OF HEALTH SAMEL ABRIDAGA (SNLA) AT HIS
REQUEST ON JULY 18.

2. ABRIGADA ASKED FIRST ABOUT U.S. ASSISTANCE TO THE MINISTRY OF
HEALTH TO ALLOW THE PURCHASE OF FOOD, MEDICINES AND TRANSPORTATION
TO THEIR HOMELANDS FOR THE REFUGEES. I TOLD HIM I HAD GIVEN 25,000
DOLLARS TO THE HIGH COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE FOR THAT PURPOSE AND
THAT AN ADDITIONAL 200,000 DOLLARS WOULD BE CHANNELED THROUGH THE
INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS.

3. WE TURNED TO THE POLITICAL SITUATION. ABRIGADA SAID THAT FNLA
IS INSISTING IN ITS CURRENT NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE MPLA ON WITH-
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DRAWAL OF EXCESS FORCES FROM LUANDA THAT BOTH SIDES MOVE OUT

SIMULTANEOUSLY, OR THAT THERE BE A RETURN TO THE STATUS QUO ANTE, THAT IS, FNLA WOULD REOCCUPY ITS HEADQUARTERS AND THE GARRISONS IT HELD IN THE CITY PRIOR TO JULY NINE. THE NATIONAL DEFENSE COMMISSION SESSION OF JULY 17 MADE NO PROGRESS ON THE ISSUE AND THE COMMISSION WAS MEETING ON THE 18TH TO MAKE ANOTHER ATTEMPT.

4. I SUGGESTED THAT FNLA WAS NOT IN A POSITION TO INSIST UPON MUCH OF ANYTHING. WHILE WE WERE TALKING WE COULD MPLA HEAVY MORTARS BOMBARDING FNLA STRONGHOLDS NORTH OF THE CITY. ABRIGADA SAID THERE ARE STILL ABOUT 2,000 FNLA TROOPS IN TOWN, INCLUDING THE 600 INTEGRATED FORCES WHO REMAINED IN BARRACKS ALL THROUGH THE SHOOTING. I POINTED OUT THAT MPLA HAD ALL ACCESS FROM THE NORTH BLOCKED. THE FNLA LEADERSHIP, HE RESPONDED, WILL NOT ABANDON ITS PEOPLE IN LUANDA, BUT HE DECLINED TO DISCUSS STRATEGY OR TO ADMIT THAT AN FNLA STRIKE FORCE WAS MOVING DOWN FROM THE NORTH.

5. UNDER WHAT CONDITIONS WOULD FNLA LEAVE THE TRANSITIONAL GOVERNMENT? ABRIGADA WAS NOT SURE, BUT THE MERE FACT OF PULLING OUT OF THE GOVERNMENT, HE SAID, WOULD CONSTITUTE A DECLARATION OF WAR. FNLA DOES NOT WANT TO LEAVE THE GOVERNMENT AND WILL DO ALL IT CAN TO REACH A NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT OF THE PRESENT CONFLICT, BUT IT CANNOT CAPITULATE. THE OUTCOME OF THE TALKS ON REMOVAL OF EXCESS FORCES FROM LUANDA WILL LARGELY DETERMINE FNLA'S POLICY IN THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE.

6. TURNING TO DETAILS OF THE BATTLE FOR LUANDA, ABRIDAGA SAID FNLA WILL REMAIN FOREVER CONVINCED THE PORTUGUESE HELPED MPLA. WHEN FOREIGN MINISTER MELO ANTUNES WAS HERE THE FNLA LEADERSHIP BERATED HIM CONSTANTLY ABOUT THIS ISSUE; ANTUNES PROTESTED THAT NO SUCH ACTIONS WERE AUTHORIZED AND THAT NONE OCCURRED. ABRIGADA SAID THE PROOF OF PORTUGUESE ARMY INVOLVEMENT CAN BE FOUND IN THE MILITARY HOSPITAL, WHERE TWENTY MILITARY POLICE LIE WOUNDED. I ASKED ABOUT FNLA CASUALTIES. NOT MANY, HE SAID. MPLA TOOK A LOT OF CASUALTIES, BUT AS USUAL, IT WAS THE CIVILIANS WHO WERE HARDEST HIT. HE CANNOT GO INTO THE GHETTOS BECAUSE OF HIS POLITICAL AFFILIATION, HE CONTINUED, BUT OBSERVERS WHO HAVE TOURED THE SLUMS TELL HIM OF HUNDREDS OF BLOATED CORPSES STILL WAITING TO BE COLLECTED. HE THREW OUT A ROUGH GUESS OF 2,000 DEAD, BUT ADMITTED HAD NO FIGURES TO BACK IT UP.

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7. TALKING WITH ABRIGADA, AS WITH ANY OF THE FNLA LEADERS, ABOUT THEIR PROBLEMS AND PLANS IS A DIFFICULT TASK. THEY ARE EMOTIONAL, CUNNING, CONTRADICTORY AND OFTEN UNABLE TO THINK AN IDEA THROUGH. ABRIGADA'S COMMENTS SHOW THAT FNLA STRATEGY NOW IS TO STALL AND TRY THROUGH SOME MEANS TO PUT PRESSURE ON THE MPLA. THE EXPECTED ATTACK FROM THE NORTH HAS NOT MATERIALIZED AND NO ONE HAS YET SPOTTED LARGE FNLA TROOP MOVEMENTS. FNLA DESPERATELY WANTS TO STAY IN THE TRANSITIONAL GOVERNMENT AND AS LONG AS THEY HAVE SOME

TROOPS IN THE CITY THEY PROBABLY WILL FEEL PROTECTED ENOUGH TO REMAIN. THEY ALSO REALIZE THAT IF THEY LEAVE THE GOVERNMENT THEY WILL HAVE GIVEN UP ALL CLAIM TO A NATIONAL CONSTITUENCY AND ANY HOPE OF INFLUENCING EVENTS BEYOND THEIR OWN ETHNIC CORNER OF ANGOLA. THE IRRATIONAL NATURE OF MUCH THAT HAPPENS HERE, HOWEVER, MAKES IT DIFFICULT TO FORESEE WHAT THE OUTCOME WILL BE OF THIS LATEST CRISIS. ALTHOUGH KNOWLEDGEABLE SOURCES HAVE TOLD ME IT IS MPLA'S INTENT TO DRIVE THE FNLA OUT OF GOVERNMENT. I TEND TO THINK MPLA WOULD PREFER TO WHIP THEM INTO SUBMISSION AND KEEP THEM IN GOVERNMENT IN ORDER NOT TO OPEN THE DOOR FOR PARTITION IN THE NORTH, SOUTH AND CABINDA. ONCE ANGOLA STARTS TO BREAK UP, CABINDA WILL GO ITS OWN WAY.

8. AS FOR ASSISTANCE TO THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH FOR REFUGEE RELIEF, I WOULD UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES HAVE GIVEN ABRIGADA ANY OF THE 25,000 DOLLARS IN MY DISCRETIONARY FUND. HIS REPUTATION AND HIS LACK OF ACTION TO HELP RETURNING REFUGEES FROM ZAIRE LEAD A REASONABLE MAN TO CONCLUDE HE IS EITHER INCOMPETENT OR DISHONEST, OR BOTH. IT IS THE HIGH COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE THAT IS DOING THE LION'S SHARE OF THE WORK WITH THE REFUGEES AND WHICH NEEDS AS MUCH MONEY AS IT CAN GET.

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